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ABSTRACT

This booklet briefly outlines the procedures to be followed by Pennsylvania school district administrators and state department of education officials in determining a school district's eligibility for state funds when the district operates its schools during a teacher strike. In order to qualify for state reimbursement, a school district must be examined by an onsite visitiation team to ensure that the district's pupils are receiving an adequate education as defined by Pennsylvania's "General Curriculum Regulations." Guidelines are presented for both school district personnel and state department officials to follow in preparing for an onsite visitation, conducting an onsite visitation, and reporting the results of a visitation. The appendix contains sample forms used for gathering and reporting visitation data. (JG)

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MANUAL FOR SCHOOL VISITS FOR DETERMINING SUBSIDY REIMBURSEMENT OF SCHOOLS THAT OPERATE DURING STRIKES

Pennsylvania Department of Education

August 1976

EA 009 721

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MANUAL FOR SCHOOL VISITS DURING STRIKES

Preface

The Administrative Code of 1929 states that the Pennsylvania Department of Education is responsible for upholding Commonwealth laws that pertain to the establishment, maintenance and operation of the state's public schools. These laws include the duty to reimburse each school district for instruction of its pupils according to its eligibility as determined by the basic instruction subsidy formula.

Under the law (Pennsylvania School Code, Section 1501), school districts must provide a minimum of 180 days of instruction per year. A day of instruction, as interpreted in Basic Education Circular 86-75, is five (elementary) or five and one-half (secondary) hours of planned pupil instruction provided as an integral part of the school program under the direction of certified school employes.

A school district is reimbursed when it provides instruction and only for the actual number of instructional days up to 180. If a school board notifies the department that it intends to keep its schools open during a strike, the department, in conformance with the School Code and State Board regulations, must determine whether the district's pupils are receiving an adequate education. An adequate education is defined as providing at least the minimum curriculum requirements as stated in Chapter 5, General Curriculum Regulations.

Pre-Visitation

I. Department of Education

A. The department encourages all districts to anticipate potential strikes and thus consider the creation of guidelines to follow during that crisis. Districts should emphasize the use of proper legal procedures while considering the district's moral obligations to students and the community. If more information is required, contact:

Office of Local Districts
Pennsylvania Department of Education
Box 911
Harrisburg, Pa. 17126
Telephone: (717) 783-3750

B. When the Commissioner for Basic Education determines that an on-site visitation is necessary, a procedure will be implemented for making team selections and assignments. The teams will gather data through objective observations, interviews and conferences.

C. The teams will be trained in the proper procedures for on-site visits.

(1) The team leader will:

(a) have full responsibility for the on-site visit.
(b) see that all necessary arrangments are made for the team visit.
(c) set up all meetings.
(d) review with the team members proper procedures for obtaining pertinent information.
(e) arrange for an exit conference.
(f) submit a report of the teams' findings to the Commissioner for Basic Education.

(2) The team members will:

(a) gather as much data as necessary to accomplish their mission.
(b) wear Pennsylvania Department of Education name badges.
(c) refer all requests for information to the team leader.
(d) have in their possession Chapter 5, General Curriculum Regulations, for use in checking the schools' curriculum offerings.
(e) hold in confidence all material and data gathered.

II. Local District

A. The superintendent will be responsible for notifying the Office of Local Districts if the school board decides that:

(1) it is not feasible to keep the schools open. The district will notify the department if there is any change in status.

(2) it is feasible to keep the schools open. The department will then arrange to have a team visit the site as soon as possible.

On-Site Visitation

I. Briefing

The team leader will brief the superintendent and the board president or representative and inform them of the team's mission (see Appendix--Exhibit 1.) The superintendent will be asked to cooperate with the team by providing guides and maps to assist the members in touring the school district. In addition, the superintendent should be prepared to provide the team with a preapproved list of substitute teachers. The team leader will be responsible for assigning team members to different buildings within the district.

II. Building Visitations

A. Upon arrival at the school, the assigned team member will notify the building principal that the department team is on the site. The principal will be asked to complete a form which calls for attendance figures on students and teachers in the building by grade level (see Appendix--Exhibit 2.)

B. The team will examine:

(1) the degree to which requirements of law and State Board regulations are being met.

(2) the degree to which the personnel who are instructing in the program are properly employed and certificated.

(3) the degree to which instruction is planned and provided to all students in attendance.

C. The team will visit classrooms to obtain the information necessary to complete Exhibit 3 in the Appendix.

D. After obtaining the completed principal data form, the team members will compile the information on an individual school building analysis form (see Appendix--Exhibit 4.)

E. At the end of the second day, the team leader will brief the superintendent, board president or board representative, and president of the local teachers' bargaining unit on the team's activities. An additional briefing will be provided after the team completes its circuit of the district.

Reporting

I. On the basis of data provided by the team, the Office of Local Districts will prepare a preliminary report (#1) within a week of the strike's termination. This report will include:

A. a statement of the team's mission presented to the school district.

B. names of representatives of the school district and other interested groups with whom the team met and dates of the meetings.

C. statistical information which includes an individual breakdown of data on elementary and secondary schools. This data will include memberships and attendance, teaching staff and pupil-teacher ratio. Specific program violations will be listed for each school.

II. The preliminary report (#1) will be forwarded within a week of the strike's end to the superintendent, the board secretary and the president of the local teachers' bargaining unit.

III. The superintendent will submit written comments on the preliminary report (#1) to the Office of Local Districts within 10 calendar days of its receipt. Those responses will be considered when the final report (#2) is written.

IV. The Office of Local Districts will prepare the final report (#2) within 10 calendar days of receiving the superintendent's written comments. This report, with its findings and conclusions, will be submitted to the Commissioner for Basic Education.

V. The Commissioner for Basic Education will notify the superintendent about any adjustments or revisions needed in the district's school calendar. The school board will be requested to supply, within 30 calendar days, a response detailing how it intends to modify the school calendar in order to provide 180 days of instruction in conformance with Section 1501 of the School Code.

APPENDIX

Exhibit 1

SPECIAL SCHOOL VISITATION

The superintendent of the _____ School District has notified the Department of Education that a strike of professional employes is in progress. The Commissioner for Basic Education has directed a specially selected team to observe the educational program presently being offered.

The purpose of our mission is to visit public school buildings in order to provide the Commissioner with information which will enable him/her to decide whether the programs being offered meet the School Laws of Pennsylvania and the regulations of the State Board of Education.

_____
Signature of Department of Education Team Leader

_____
Signature of Superintendent

_____
Date

Exhibit 2

BUILDING PRINCIPAL DATA FORM

School Building _____

Principal _____

Date _____

Grade Level TOTALS	Grade Levels							Area TOTALS
Pupils-- No. Assigned								
No. Present								
No. Absent								
Teachers-- No. Assigned								
No. Present								
No. Absent								
Substitutes*-- No. Present								
Instructional Staff**-- No. Present								

_____
Signature of Principal

* Count only the substitutes who have been preapproved by the school board.
** Count only the teachers and preapproved substitutes.

Exhibit 3

TEAM MEMBER CLASSROOM DATA FORM

_____
School District

Grade Level _____ Date _____

Subject/Course _____ School Building _____

Time of Observation _____ Room Number _____

TEACHER STATUS:

1. Teacher's name _____
2. Regular teacher _____
3. Preapproved substitutes _____
4. Other _____
5. Certified in area of instruction being observed ___/___ (Yes / No)
6. Lesson plans ___/___ (Yes / No)

STUDENT STATUS:

1. Total number of pupils assigned _____
2. Total number of pupils present _____
3. Total number of pupils absent _____

COMMENTS:

_____

_____

_____

_____
Signature of Team Member

Exhibit 4

INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL BUILDING ANALYSIS

School District _____

School Building _____

Principal _____

Date _____

I. Attendance

Is there normal school attendance?

Grade Level TOTALS	Grade Levels							Area TOTALS
Pupils-- No. Assigned								
No. Present								
No. Absent								
Per Cent Attendance								

II. Certification

Is every classroom staffed by properly employed persons?

Grade Level TOTALS	Grade Levels							Area TOTALS
Teachers-- No. Assigned								
No. Present								
No. Absent								
Per Cent Present								
Substitutes-- No. Present								
Certified Staff-- No. Present								
Noncert. Staff No. Present								

III. Program

a. Is the program for the day planned?

Area	Yes	No
Lesson plan?		
Combined classes*? 1) one grade level 2) different grade levels		
Classroom control?		
Special education in session?		
Instructional time?		

b. Has the school district met the minimum curriculum requirements of the State Board of Education?

Elementary	Secondary	
	Junior High	Senior High

Comments:

_____

_____

_____

_____

* Count only the combinations not included in pre-strike classroom organization.